

Norse Commercial Services Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1276257

Name of lead inspector: Derrick Baughan, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection date(s): 2–3 May 2018

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 280 Fifers Lane
Norwich
Norfolk
NR6 6EQ



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was first announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Norse Commercial Services Limited (Norse) gained approval as a prime contractor in March 2017. Prior to that, it had not been involved in providing government-funded training. The first cohort started in June 2017. At the time of the inspection, 61 apprentices of all ages were studying programmes at different levels, mainly in team leading and supervision and management. All apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships and are all employees of Norse. Norse uses two subcontractors to deliver theory training.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Significant progress

Leaders and managers followed a well-thought-out strategy for developing the apprenticeship offer. They are well aware of the risks associated with not having provided government-funded training before and have taken a cautious approach. They have used consultants experienced in apprenticeship programmes. In addition, leaders have focused on recruiting staff with previous experience in apprenticeship programmes. Plans for growth are clear and detailed and include appropriate staff recruitment and training.

Norse has an exceedingly strong corporate focus on developing staff to improve their skills and career prospects. Leaders have applied this focus well to the apprenticeship programme. Leaders and managers have ensured that all elements of the apprenticeship programme are in place. Managers work well to ensure the apprentices get the required 20% of work time to do off-the-job training. In a very few cases, apprentices struggle to get the amount of work time to study. However, as a result of leaders' decision to start the programme with the time management module, apprentices develop good skills in managing their time in the workplace and develop creative solutions to solve the problem.

Managers are well aware of the details of the programme and what they are required to do to help apprentices achieve well. Apprentices are also fully aware of the needs of the programmes. They fully understand the pattern of assessment for standards-based programmes.

Staff development is particularly good. Norse have established a cohort of mentors for the apprentices; these mentors have had comprehensive training and meet regularly to further develop their work. In some cases the mentors are the apprentices' line managers, but not always. Directors have developed well the apprentice management team to ensure that they have good skills and experience.

Staff manage subcontractors well. They put subcontractors through a rigorous selection process and directly monitor the quality of delivery by observations of teaching, learning and assessment. The quality of the training materials produced by Norse and the subcontractors is good.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? **Reasonable progress**

Apprentices develop excellent workplace skills and behaviours as a result of their training. They apply these in the workplace to the benefit of the business. Apprentices are clear about what they have learned and how this will help them to progress with their careers.

Workplace supervisors, mentors and apprenticeship coaches (coaches) provide good information, advice and guidance in the workplace. This ensures that apprentices are fully ready to start their programme. Leaders and managers screen all applicants and involve line managers in the selection process to ensure that there is clear progression for apprentices once they have completed their programme.

Apprentices' work is of a good standard, with high levels of literacy. Coaches and apprentices link well on- and off-the-job training. For example, apprentices demonstrate high levels of reflective practice. One apprentice is using their new-found knowledge of emotional intelligence to work with their new team, in order to help all of them to understand and further improve their working relationships.

Coaches work well with apprentices to check their understanding of new concepts being taught, and to further develop their knowledge. Coaches relate this knowledge well to workplace settings through highly effective questioning and coaching techniques in individual sessions. Coaches make good use of questioning and effective feedback on assessed work to encourage deeper understanding.

Coaches set effective targets for apprentices in order for them to link learning to their workplace. Apprentices produce high-quality evidence of this for assessment. However, targets are set for the apprentices and therefore they are not sufficiently well involved in setting their own targets.

Support for apprentices to develop their functional skills needs improvement. Coaches provide some support but arrangements to provide specialist support are not always effective. Apprentices report problems in getting sufficient support for their functional skills, such as having to travel significant distances. As a result of

good use of learner feedback, managers are aware of this problem and are currently recruiting for a permanent, part-time, functional skills tutor, to replace the existing contracted support arrangements.

As a result of good training and good support from coaches and mentors, apprentices develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, one very mature apprentice can now use ICT systems within the workplace despite being unable to use ICT at all before starting the programme.

Coaches track the apprentices' development, and the apprenticeship manager reviews the progress on a monthly basis. However, leaders and managers do not record apprentices' skills development sufficiently well. Tracking is based on completion of assignments and attendance at classes, and does not take into account the progress apprentices make in their skills and knowledge. Managers are aware of this and plans to use an electronic tracking system are at an advanced stage.

Arrangements for overall quality improvement are not yet complete. Staff monitor the quality of the programmes in a number of ways and are dealing well with all the weaknesses found by inspectors. Managers carry out observations of teaching, learning and assessment and use the results of these to help staff to improve. However, observations focus too much on the process of teaching and not enough on what apprentices are learning and the progress they are making. Moreover, leaders have not yet established a clear process for coordinating findings and producing an improvement action plan.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Norse has an excellent corporate focus on keeping learners safe. Health and safety features strongly in all that Norse does and safeguarding apprentices is part of the business processes for all staff. Norse has a designated safeguarding leader who has received appropriate training.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe in the workplace. They know how to keep themselves and their colleagues safe. They understand to whom concerns should be reported. Norse processes focus well on ensuring that apprentices are safe in the workplace, particularly those in hazardous areas such as waste recycling plants.

Too many apprentices have only a superficial understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. During induction, apprentices learn about the 'Prevent' duty, British values, and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. However, coaches do not do enough to develop and reinforce that understanding during the programme. Apprentices who have recently started remember the details of this element of the induction and can articulate well the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018